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AUTHOR	Smith, Judie
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ABSTRACT

A disturbing escalation in campus emergencies compels school districts to draft effective crisis-management action plans. Effective plans can be devised that relieve burdens on principals and other school personnel, by diminishing chaos and panic, disseminating accurate information, attending to emotional strain on staff and students, and providing essential follow-up services. Advance preparation is essential for effective crisis management. Careful planning can prevent the escalation of a crisis, and each school must develop a specific plan suiting their own needs. Plans should include a team of trained individuals who are prepared to respond should a crisis occur. The principal, nurse, counselor, security officer, parent liaison, and faculty liaison each have important roles in crisis management and must be prepared to respond effectively. This manual provides step-by-step guidelines for managing a variety of crisis situations. It includes steps for mitigation of, and immediate response to, an emergency. All crises share some common aspects, including the need for communication, rumor control, and effective media interview skills. This section includes a sample fact sheet, memos, letters, media guidelines, and response steps for 29 crisis situations. Some crises require additional planning for such exigencies as bomb threats, when principals must make critical decisions about whether or not the threat is real. Following the resolution of a crisis, numerous issues typically remain to be addressed. Memories of the experience, for example, can traumatize members of the school community, particularly young students, making long-term counseling important. School administrators must appreciate the different needs and vulnerabilities of children of differing ages. This section provides suggestions for coping with post-traumatic stress; offering crisis counseling for students, faculty, and parents; and hosting a community meeting to facilitate broader healing. Effective recovery must begin with stress management for the crisis workers, particularly for crisis and grief counselors, and requires effective post-crisis debriefing. (Contains 22 references.) (TEJ)

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